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PAX ROMANA (MIIC / ICMICA)
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POUR INFORMATION

Intervention by PAX ROMANA IMCS-ICMICA on Agenda item 9

Distinguished Chairman (and members of this esteemed Assembly)

On behalf of Pax Romana, a Movement that brings together Christian students and professionals in more than eighty countries, we extend to you and Bureau our sincere greetings and congratulations.

We intervene at this moment of our proceedings on Agenda item 9 which reads "the right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation". An item which is amply substantiated under the various instruments of Human Rights existing within the scope of the UN System. The declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples (G.A. resolution 1514 (XV) of 14.12.60) provides us the framework to look into this matter with deep sensitivity. As well as other declaration and conventions, that exist today. In the declaration mentioned, it declares that

2. "All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development".

4. "All armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent people shall cease in order to enable them to exercise peacefully and freely their right to complete independence and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected".

During these last days we have been to witness to interventions made on this point by many gathered at this august Assembly, referring to situations for instance, Namibia, Western Sahara, East Timor etc where these rights have been denied.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of Pax Romana, we draw your attention as well as the persons gathered around you to the situation in East Timor, a narrow island in the Lesser Sunda chain, a rugged place of savannah and mountain where heavy monsoonal wet seasons alternate with long, parched dry seasons during which food runs short. The 670.000 East Timorese are a mixture of Malay and Melanesian racial types. (The most common of some fifteen languages on Timor is Tetum). The people of E. Timor are heirs to a history of their own, experiencing at various moments severe hardships from overseas.

Without going into much detail, since the change of circumstances on 25.4.1974, the people of East Timor have been aspiring deeply towards their right for self-determination. Unfortunately,

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their aspiration, which has drawn the world attention, eventhough limited, still remains a distant goal. On successive occasions, the UN has expressed in clear terms, what should be the steps to reach that much sought after goal of the East Timorese.

In spite of these resolutions, the situation has been deteriorating at an alarming rate with different reports pointing to starvation, disappearances, aggression from outside etc. As this Commission is concerned about the destiny of the people all over the world, we cannot sit back and let this situation become worse. We are answerable to this people, who are suffering and denied their rights. Seven years of repressions have not subjugated these people, who are not just numbers but with body and soul.

With the limited access of information available, in late 1979 it was reported that the conditions were "worse than Biafra and potentially as serious as Cambodia".

Experts from international organisations who have worked in Timor, said that there was no famine there but that there were food shortages, from which children were the principal suffurers. This situation of starving children continues today in some parts of the island especially the Bohar region. The occupation forces has carried out forcible population movements in various parts of Timor and suspects are not allowed to move about freely or cultivate the land. These forcible "regroupments" have caused food problems and a part of the population of East Timor has become dependent on external aid, through limited channels.

These limited facts move us to say that the population of East Timor has been systematically denied the rights to freedom of expression, association assembly and movement. Movement and communication within and beyond East Timor has been tightly controlled.

The July-September 1981 offensive of the occupation forces according to a Church agency source was "like a cyclone resulting in the deaths of 500 innocent people, mostly women and children".

This spiralling cycle of violence should stop in order that the people of that part of the world could exercise their own rights. As late Bishop Zwane of Swaziland told us in 1980 Seminar, "the business of the Church is to seek the Truth and this takes on a special urgency and importance in times of civil disorder and war, when Truth is the casualty".

We appreciate deeply the deliberations within the 35th Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of

Minorities and endorse draft resolution 1982/20 presented in the document E/CN.4/1983/4 Chap. I.A as well as the resolution of the G.A. on November 23rd, 1982 at its 37th session.

We believe that the redemption of the human being is not only spiritual; it includes all human conditions. It includes the structures, the institutions, the values in and through which we try to live. Within this context, people matter more than any other considerations, whether geopolitical or otherwise. As the proclamation of Teheran (13.5.68) states"11. Massive denials of human rights, arising out of aggression or any aimed conflict with their tragic consequences, and resulting in untold misery, engender reactions which could engulf the world in ever growing hostilities. It is the obligation of the international community to co-operate in eradicating such scourges".

Chairman, before ending this intervention, we draw your kind attention to the orphan seminarians in Dili who have taken to writing psalms in the tradition of the Old testament. One begins "Where are my sisters and brothers ... ? Where are my father and my mother ?".

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Geneva, 7.2.1983